

The Royal Irish Rifles History¹

*with notes pertaining to the service of Sargeant Jamieson (James) Smith
1810-1881*

The Royal Irish Rifles developed from an infantry regiment raised in 1758 called the 83rd. (County of Dublin) Regiment. After it was disbanded in 1763, a Scottish regiment was raised and given the same number. This Scottish regiment was the 83rd. (Royal Glasgow Volunteers) Regiment of Foot, which fought in The American War of Independence. In 1781, it was stationed in the English Channel Islands off the French coast, and fought the French when they invaded the island of Jersey. That regiment then went to New York in America, and was disbanded there in 1783.

Ten years later, in 1793, another regiment was raised in Dublin by Colonel Fitch and given the number 83. This led to it becoming known as Fitch's Grenadiers. This body of soldiers fought against the Maroons in Jamaica, where their Commanding Officer was killed in 1795. The 2nd Battalion of the 83rd. Regiment was raised in England, and gained many battle honours between 1809 and 1814. The fact that the 2nd Battalion was raised in England may explain why the regiment is described as the 83rd Regiment of Foot (Northumberland) on Jamieson Smith's death register.

In 1805, the 1st. Battalion of the 83rd. was sent to The Cape of Good Hope at the very Southern tip of Africa, where it spent 11 years on garrison duty. The regiment then saw service in Ceylon, whence it returned to England and then to Ireland. It was first stationed in Castlebar, County Mayo and then in Limerick from 1823 to 1833. It then went to Dublin in 1834. Later that same year the 83rd. embarked and sailed Westwards across The Atlantic to Halifax in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The regiment served in Canada from 1834 to 1843. Military service there involved coping with wild terrain and extremely harsh weather conditions. In 1838, one action of The 83rd. Regiment to apprehend bandits involved a sleigh journey over deep snow of 600 miles in a temperature of 30 degrees below freezing. Another Canadian action The 83rd. was involved in necessitated advancing 15 miles led by Native American scouts across the ice of Lake Erie in winter to attack Pelee Island, a French fortress.

In 1843, the 83rd. returned to England and then went again to Ireland in 1845. After four years there, it embarked for service in India. Arriving there in 1849, it was initially stationed at Deesa, and then had to march 237 miles at the hottest time of year to the town of Nasirabad, when the uprising known as The Indian Mutiny broke

¹ extracted from: Memoirs and Services Of the Eighty-Third Regiment County of Dublin, From 1793 to 1907, Including The Campaigns of the Regiment In the West Indies, Africa, The Peninsula, Ceylon, Canada, and India.

out. In 1858 The 83rd. became part of the Rajputanan Field Force under the command of Sir Hugh Rose, together with the 8th. King's Royal Irish Hussars.

1825

The regiment was stationed in Kandy from January, 1825, to October, 1825, when it received the route for Colombo, preparatory to embarkation for England, on board the transports *Amity* and *Arab*; the former vessel, with the headquarters division, under Lieutenant-Colonel Cother, CB, sailed on the 4th December, and the latter, under Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Kelly, with the remainder of the regiment, a few days afterwards.

During the services of the regiment in Ceylon (a period of eleven years) it sustained a loss by deaths of 17 officers and 491 non-commissioned officers and rank and file.

Upon the embarkation of the regiment at Colombo, his Excellency Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Barnes, K.C.B., was pleased to issue a most complimentary order to the regiment on its departure from Ceylon for England, Lieutenant-Colonel Cother, the commanding officer, was particularly complimented by the lieutenant-general, and Lieutenant-Colonel Kelly was especially mentioned for his talents and exertions during the Kandyan rebellion.

1827

Note: Jamieson Smith enlisted in the 83rd Regiment of Foot in 1827.

1829

After a passage of about five months, the regiment arrived in England on the 16th April, and on the 18th May, 1829, landed at Gosport, and was quartered at Forton Barracks, where it remained till the 27th August following, from which place it embarked on board the transports *Hope*, *Amphitrite*, and *William Harris*, for Scotland, and landed at Leith a few days afterwards and marched to Glasgow.

ON the 3rd December, 1829, Major the Hon. Henry Dundas, M.P., succeeded to the lieutenant-colonelcy, vice Cother, who retired.

1830

The regiment was stationed at Glasgow until the 16th August, 1830, when it embarked on board steam vessels for Belfast, in Ireland, and on landing marched to Enniskillen.

During the stay of the regiment at Enniskillen, it furnished detachments to Omagh, Lifford, Sligo, and Ballyshannon, and on the 1st November, 1831, proceeded to Castlebar.

1832

The regiment was quartered at Castlebar until the 23rd October, 1832, when it received a route for Limerick, at which place the headquarters arrived on the 29th of the same month. During the stay of the regiment at Castlebar, it furnished detachments to Drunnore, Westport, Foxford, Ballinrobe, and Tuam.

The cholera having made its appearance in the corps, on the 26th June, 1832, the whole of the men at headquarters, consisting of 5 companies, and staff, were ordered into camp at Ballinew, about a mile distant from the town, and remained encamped until the 5th of September, when instructions were received to reoccupy the barracks. The regiment lost 10 men by this disease at Castlebar, and 2 officers fell victims to this malady at Ballinrobe.

The regiment removed to Limerick in 1832, when it furnished detachments to Newcastle, Bruff, Galbally, Kilfinnan, Tipperary, and Killaloe.

The officers named in the margin died at this station.²

On the 11th August, 1833, the regiment received a route for Dublin, where it arrived on the 19th of that month.

1834

On the 22nd of February, 1834, the regiment received a letter of readiness to proceed to Cork for embarkation to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and on the 5th of April the 1st division embarked on board the Innisfaile steamer, and landed at Cork on the next day; the headquarters division following a few days afterwards.

The separation of the service and depot companies took place on the 1st April, and the latter, under Major Trydell, proceeded to Mullingar.

During the stay of the regiment at Dublin, the officer named in the margin died.³

The service companies, consisting of 2 field officers, 6 captains, 18 subalterns, 5 staff, 30 sergeants, 10 drummers, and 479 rank and file, embarked at Cork, on board the freight ships *Brunswick* and *Rickers*, on the 21st April and 15th May, 1834, and landed at Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the 26th May and 20th June following.

Note: A son Mathew Smith was born at sea in 1834. Family tradition claims the birth was on the Brunswick.

Cholera having made its appearance in the town of Halifax, the three companies at headquarters were ordered into camp at Windmill Hill, a short distance from the barracks, on the 8th September, and remained encamped until the 1st October. The regiment only lost one man by this disease.

² Major T Summerfield, Lieutenant Hon R Clifford

³ Lieutenant R Coghlan

On the 30th September of this year, Major-General Hastings Frazer, C.B., succeeded to the colonelcy of the regiment vice Lieutenant-General Hodgson, removed to the 4th Foot.

The companies which had been stationed at Cape Breton, Prince Edward's Island, etc., since the arrival of the regiment at Halifax, returned to the headquarters on the 17th, 18th, and 20th July of this year.

1836

During this year the regiment remained stationary at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

1837

The regiment remained in Nova Scotia until the 29th of June, 1837, when, in consequence of the unsettled state of Lower Canada, orders were received for its embarkation for Quebec on board her Majesty's frigate *Vestal* and *Champion* sloop of war. The headquarters landed on the 12th, and the remaining companies on the 13th July, occupying the citadel barracks.

During the services of the regiment at Nova Scotia, a period of about three years, it sustained a loss by deaths of 23 rank and file.

Note: Margaret Isabella Smith was born at the citadel in Halifax in 1837.

Upon the embarkation of the regiment, Major-General Sir Colin Campbell, K, CB, was pleased to issue a complimentary order, Lieutenant-Colonel Hon. H. Dundas at this time commanding.

On the 3rd August, 1 sergeant and 20 rank and file proceeded to Gross Isle, and returned to the headquarters on the 19th October. On the 1st November, Major Trydell, with two companies, embarked for Three Rivers, and having remained at that post about ten days, received instructions to proceed to Montreal.

On the 8th December, the headquarters and remaining four companies received orders to embark the following day for Montreal, and landed at that station on the 11th, occupying part of the Quebec Gate barrack.

On the 13th December, the regiment formed part of the brigade under Lieutenant-General Sir J. Colbourne, K.C.B., which proceeded to attack St. Eustache, and were actively engaged in that day's operations.

The following morning the brigade proceeded to Benoit, and returned to Montreal on the 17th December.

1838

In January of this year, two companies proceeded on sleighs to the Upper Provinces, and after remaining some days at St. Thomas, distant about 600 miles

from Montreal, one of them, under the command of Lieutenant Kelsall, proceeded to Amherstburg.

The brigands having come over from the American shore and taken possession of Fighting Island, this company, with one of the 32nd, proceeded on the 25th February to disperse them, which service they effectually performed; the brigands leaving behind them a small piece of cannon, with ammunition, muskets, etc. On the 3rd March, this company was again actively employed against the brigands at Peel Island, in conjunction with a part of the 32nd regiment, and finally rejoined the headquarters with the other company on the 17th June.

The headquarters remained at Montreal until the 6th May, when it proceeded via the St. Lawrence to Kingston.

On the 11th November, Lieutenant Johnson, with 44 men of the regiment and a party of marines, embarked on board her Majesty's steamboat *Experiment*, with a view to cut off two American schooners, laden with some hundreds of brigands, and whom it was reported they intended to land in the neighbourhood of Prescott. On their arrival, it was discovered that these marauders had effected a landing about a mile and a half below the town, and taken possession of a large stone mill and adjacent houses.

On the morning of the 13th, an attack on the brigands was decided on, and Lieutenant Johnson and a party, with the marines under Lieutenant Parker, reinforced by a number of volunteers, proceeded to attack them. The men advanced under a galling fire from the walls at some distance from the mill, and speedily expelling them from this position, compelled them to seek refuge in the mill and houses. Lieutenant Johnson then attempted to storm one of the houses filled with brigands, and in the act of doing so was killed, and four rank and file wounded. Being destitute of artillery to batter the houses, the party was ordered to retire. In this affair the brigands sustained a loss of about 40 killed and 28 prisoners.

On the 16th of this month, Colonel Dundas and four companies of the regiment, with some heavy artillery, landed at Prescott, and at once took up position about 500 yards from the mill. The guns were brought to bear on the houses with great effect, and it being now late, and daylight wearing away, the lieutenant-colonel ordered the regiment to advance, when a smart fire was opened by the brigands from one of the houses, and as quickly replied to. The buildings on the left of the mill being by this time gained, were set fire to, and the enemy, seeing no prospect of escape, threw out a white flag, and about 130 of them surrendered unconditionally.

Their killed in this affair amounted to about 30. The only loss sustained by the regiment on this occasion was one private killed. The four companies returned to Kingston the day following.

1839

During this year the regiment remained stationary at Kingston.

Note: Mary Ann Smith born in Fort Henry in 1839

1840

On the 19th May, 1840, the officer named in the margin⁴ died at this station, and he was succeeded first by Lieutenant B. H. Browne, and on his promotion Ensign William Nott was appointed adjutant. Ensign Nott was promoted from the ranks, and performed the duties of adjutant most efficiently for eleven years, when he became captain by seniority in 1851, at Kurrachee.

The regiment remained at Kingston, until the 20th and 21st May, 1840, when it embarked in steamboats for London and St. Thomas, and marched into quarters at these stations on the 29th and 30th of the same month.

1841

On the 14th May, 1841, Lieutenant Wynniatt was accidentally drowned while endeavouring to ford the River Thames on horseback.

On the 4th October, 1841, Captain Colquhoun died at London (England) while on leave of absence.

Note: Matilda Smith born at London Barracks in 1841. An infantry post known as the "framed barracks" was built following the 1837-38 Patriot's Rebellion. The barracks burned down in 1869, and the post was formally dis-established in 1874. Although there are no remains, the site was located within the northern two-thirds of 15 acre Victoria Park, which was established in 1878.

1842

The 1st division of the regiment, under the command of Brevet Major Swinburne, marched en route to Toronto on the 7th July, 1842; and the 2nd division or headquarters, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Trydell, on the following day. The former arrived at Toronto on the 14th, and the latter on the 15th July, 1842.

On the 2nd August, 1842, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel B. Trydell succeeded to the lieutenant-colonelcy of the regiment, vice the Hon. H. Dundas, placed on half-pay.

1843

The 1st division of the regiment proceeded on the 22nd May, 1843, to Three Rivers, under the command of Major Swinburne. The 2nd division and headquarters proceeded to Quebec on the 23rd, and arrived there on the 27th May. No. 4

⁴ Lieutenant and Adjutant J. Stubbs

company joined headquarters at Quebec on the 30th May, leaving No. 1 and the Light Company at Three Rivers. Light Company and No. 1 joined the headquarters at Quebec on the 11th June, 1843, from Three Rivers.⁵

The regiment embarked for England at Quebec, Canada, on the 16th June, 1843. The 1st division and headquarters, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Trydell, on board the *Countess*, London freight ship, consisting of 3 captains, 5 subalterns, 3 staff, 28 sergeants, 8 drummers, and 502 rank and file, 54 women, and 110 children; and the 2nd division, under the command of Major Swinburne, on board the *Jamaica*, freight ship, consisting of 1 captain, 4 subalterns, 1 staff, 10 sergeants, 2 drummers, 184 rank and file, 16 women, and 20 children, sailed together on the 17th June, 1843, and both ships anchored at Spithead on the 10th July, 1843.

Note: Jamieson, his wife Isabella, and children Mathew, Margaret Isabella, Mary Ann, and Matilda returned to England on either the Countess, or the Jamaica. Jamieson was discharged, aged 39, on June 25, 1850, at the Chatham dockyards. After the death of his wife Isabella, Jamieson returned to Canada taking up residence in the Markham area near his late wife's family. He was accompanied by his daughters Margaret, Mary Ann, Matilda, Rebecca, and Catherine.

The 2nd division, under the command of Major Swinburne, landed at Gosport on the 11th; and the 1st division and headquarters, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Trydell, on the 12th July, 1843.

The regiment was quartered in Forton Barracks, Gosport, until the 17th July, when the 1st division proceeded by railroad, through London, to Weedon, and the headquarters division on the following day, at which they occupied barracks until the 4th August, 1843, when the headquarters with two companies proceeded to Northampton, and the remainder of the regiment was distributed in detachments at Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Burslem, Coventry, Hanley, and Newcastle-under-Lyme.

On the 17th October, 1843, the regiment received the new percussion muskets.

1844

In April, 1844, the regiment was again collected at Weedon, where it remained till October, 1844, when the headquarters and three companies proceeded to Leeds, and the remainder furnished detachments to York, Bradford, Sheffield, Keighley, Huddersfield, Halifax, and Scarborough Castle.

⁵ The regiment, on its route from Toronto to Quebec, passed down the Lachine Rapids, in the River St. Lawrence; the 1st division on the 23rd, and the 2nd division on the 24th May, 1843.

1845

In June, 1845, the regiment was assembled at Manchester, where it remained till 22nd July, when it proceeded by rail to Liverpool, and embarked for Dublin, where it arrived the following morning, and proceeded en route to Limerick, Cahir, and Tipperary. The headquarters of the regiment were established at Limerick, and furnished detachments also to Kilrush, the forts on the Shannon, Rathkeale, Newcastle, Castleconnell, Croom, Ennis, and Clare Castle.

1846

In September, 1846, the regiment proceeded by divisions to Dublin, and was assembled there in October. It occupied Richmond Barracks, and subsequently detached companies to Aldboro' House and Island Bridge Barracks.

During the stay of the regiment at Dublin, Captain T. J. St. Aubyn died while on leave of absence in Surrey.

1847

In May, 1847, the headquarters proceeded to Kilkenny, and during its stay there furnished detachments to Carlow, Castlecomer, Carrick-on-Suir, Bagenalstown, Thomas Town, Wexford, Enniscarthy, New Ross, Callan, and Graiguenemagh.

1848

Lieutenant T. Lane died at Castlecomer on 26th June, 1848.

On the 1st September, 1848, Major - General Sir Frederick Stovin, K.C.B. and KCMG, succeeded General Frazer in the colonelcy of the regiment.

In September, 1848, the regiment was removed to Fermoy, whence it furnished detachments to Fethard, Lismore, and Clogheen.

On the 1st December, 1848, the regiment was ordered to be augmented to the establishment as per margin, and received instructions to prepare for service in the East Indies, and on the 9th January, 1849, two 'Companies, with headquarters, proceeded to Cork, and embarked on the 11th, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Trydell, in the freight ship Bombay, for Bombay, and sailed for its destination on the 17th of the same month.

1849

The remainder of the regiment followed in the succeeding months of February and March, as follows, viz.

In the *China*, under Major Townsend.

In the *Mermaid*, under Brevet Major Ainslie.

In the *Marion*, under Lieutenant-Colonel Law.

In the *Ursula*, under Captain Lloyd.

In the *Zion's Hope*, under Major Swinburne.

On the 8th May, 1849, the headquarters arrived in Bombay, and on the 10th, disembarked and proceeded to Poona, and arrived at that station on the 18th of the same month. The whole of the regiment, however, was not assembled at Poona till the 14th July, 1849, where it remained till November, 1850.

1850

Note: Jamieson Smith discharged from the 83rd Regiment June 25, 1850 at the Chatham dockyards.